

Value of day care lost under popcorn [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Liberal strategist Scott Reid chose his words poorly when he said the Conservative party's day-care policy means parents who get the promised \$100 monthly for each child under age six would spend that pittance on "beer and popcorn."

The reaction to Reid's heat-of-the-moment comment from media, the Conservative leader and candidates, and organizations that virulently oppose any government role in child care has been over the top as well.

The Kids First Parent Association even called the comments "hate-mongering" and went on to describe day-care advocacy as "anti-woman, anti-child and anti-parent" and "government-sponsored hate campaign."

To label a national day-care program in this extreme fashion leads only to one conclusion: these easily insulted folks believe that all mothers must stay home to look after their children aged zero to six years whether or not they can afford -- financially, emotionally, or careerwise & to do it. They take it for granted that such care is superior to what children can receive outside the home, which is an impossibility. This has the odour of "The woman's place is in the home," no matter how it is dressed up.

As a mother of two who has used child care in a home-setting in my own home and someone else's, and in day-care centres, I beg to differ. I have had poor home care and less than satisfactory day care, but I have also have good and excellent care in both circumstances.

The worst experience has been in trying to find either type, in order to work to support myself and my children, and to pursue my studies and interests. That is why I was forced to start my own day-care centre and to participate in other co-operative, and pioneering efforts that were very time- and energy-consuming.

Lack of reliable and high quality child care made it difficult for me to have a full-time job during a certain period of my life, and I became a home-staying mother on welfare, with all the negatives attached to that predicament.

The Conservative party isn't offering a child-care plan but a meagre baby bonus of sorts, leading to no additional day-care spaces anywhere, let alone to higher quality day care with improved wages and working conditions for workers at these centres.

It provides merely a small amount of extra money for parents to spend however they wish, and not necessarily on child care.

I see it as a cheap election trick, nothing more, nothing less, that offends me more than the Reid's utterings.

As to the sentiment, "The state has no place in the child-care choices of the nation," with which an anti-day care organization concludes its press release, I disagree most vigorously.

Without state funding and involvement there simply won't be any choices for ordinary parents, except for those who can afford to pay for nannies and upscale child care or who happen to have available female relatives who can take on the arduous task. Those choices were never available to me.

I would hope that those who wish to be home-staying mothers -- and their political cohorts in the Conservative party -- would make an effort to take a wider, more tolerant and pragmatic view of child care in Canada, as the situation is not as black and white as they are hell-bent to portray.

- reprinted from Saskatoon StarPhoenix

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